(b) the reasons for increase in the rate of unemployment especially amongst the rural youth; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to increase employment opportunities for rural youths?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) As per the latest National Sample Survey carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), the unemployment rate as per the Usual Status Approach in Punjab during 1999-2000 was 2.6% and 3.2% of the labour force in rural and urban areas respectively. The figures for 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 are not available since no survey has been carried out.

(b) The increase in the rate of unemployment in rural areas was mainly because the rural economy did not grow sufficiently to absorb the new entrants to the labour force and the backlog of the unemployed.

(c) The Ninth Plan has accorded priority to agriculture and rural development with a view to generating adequate productive employment and eradication of poverty. The Plan had focused on sectors, sub-sectors and technologies which are labour intensive, in regions characterized by higher rates of unemployment and under-employment. The approach to the 10th Plan has recognized the importance of providing gainful high quality employment to the additions to the labour force and it is listed as one of the monitorable objectives for the 10th Plan and beyond. The growth strategy of 10th Plan would lay emphasis on rapid growth of those sectors which are likely to create high quality employment opportunities. This will help in providing employment to the rural youth in Punjab as well.

Labour Force

856. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to uplift and take care of the well-being of the vast labour force of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government would consider constructing independent hospitals in labour-dominated places like Sivakasi and other industrialised centres like Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) and (b) The measures for the uplift of the well being of the labour force of the country are part of on-going process of which legislative and developmental actions are taken up from time to time to improve their conditions depending upon the availability of resources and infrastructure.

(c) The Employees' State Insurance Corporation has already established a 500 bedded Hospital at Coimbatore and a 50 bedded Hospital at Sivakasi exclusively for beneficiaries of ESI Scheme. At present, there is no proposal for construction of Hospitals in the above mentioned places.

Schemes / Programmes for Welfare of Child Labour

857. SHRI NABAM REBIA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the schemes and programme formulated and being implemented by Government in the country for welfare of child labour; and

(b) the funds allocated for implementation of the said schemes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) The Government of India has been implementing two schemes, for rehabilitation of Children withdrawn from work, namely the scheme of National Child Labour Project (NCLP) and the scheme of Grant-in-aid to Voluntary Organisations. The major activity under NCLP is running special schools / centres for rehabilitation of children withdrawn from work through non-formal education, vocational training, nutrition, health care, stipend etc. So far 100 NCLPs have been sanctioned in child labour endemic states for the coverage of about 2.10 lakhs children withdrawn from work. Under the Scheme of grant-in-aid, funds are released to Voluntary Organisations, on the recommendation of the concerned State Government, for taking up action oriented projects for the benefit of Children withdrawn from work.

(b) An amount of Rs. 249.60 crore has been allocated for implementation of child labour schemes during the Ninth Five Year Plan.

Unemployed People in the Country

858. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any assessment of the number of unemployed people in the country;